(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and by when a decision is likely to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) and (b) The Department of Industrial Development (DID) has been merged with Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).

FDI in Tea Plantations

5208. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal for simplifying conditions for foreign companies to invest in tea plantations and raising the limit of FDI to 74 per cent;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor;'and

(c) what is the expected impact of this move on the fate of domestic tea industry which is facing competition and challenges all round?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A proposal to allow 74% Foreign Direct Investment in tea industry is under consideration of the Government.

(c) The Foreign Direct Investment may provide the tea industry with the much required capital for replanting, new planting etc. and technology for upgrading and modernising the production and packaging processes etc.

Protecting the Interests of Tobacco Farmers

5209, SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have protected tobacco farmers' interests regarding the proposed restrictions against tobacco;

(b) whether Government have sent their representative to various Expert Committee meetings on the subject;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government and the Tobacco Board have been less than alert on this matter;

(d) what steps are proposed to ensure that tobacco farmers are not harmed by hasty legislation;